

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, EMERGING THREATS,  
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
Christopher Shays, Connecticut  
Chairman  
Room B-372 Rayburn Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Tel: 202 225-2548  
Fax: 202 225-2382

## Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays February 15, 2006

Like the 9/11 Commission, the Select Committee took an unflinching look at horrific events, looked back in order to look forward, and assembled a factual narrative that should inform, guide, even compel, reforms. The ninety findings in our report provide a coherent and detailed foundation upon which Congress and the administration can repair and improve national preparedness and response capabilities.

Perhaps the most disappointing conclusion emerging from our work is how little we appear to have learned, or how much we've allowed ourselves to forget, since September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. Whether the disaster is triggered by Mother Nature or murderous Islamists, preparedness demands vigilance and imagination. Effective response requires communication and a unified command structure willing to take decisive action despite imperfect information.

In Katrina's wake, we found neither thorough preparedness nor effective response. In a situation that demanded action, the default setting at all levels – federal, state, local, philanthropic, corporate and even individual – seemed to be passivity. Wait and see. Wait to be asked. Wait for more information.

While we waited, people died.

The only thing missing from this report is a broadly bipartisan consensus. Thanks to Chairman Tom Davis' leadership and the work of Democratic Members who did accept our invitation to participate, I know this is much the same report we would be issuing if the House Minority Leader had appointed Members. The compelling weight of the facts makes the findings and tone of this report inevitable. However, the lack of official Democratic participation denies the American people the full representation they deserve in our official deliberations and delays national healing in favor of what can only be diagnosed as pathological partisanship.

Nevertheless, this report illuminates a clear path forward for all of us. As the 9/11 Commission concluded, "A rededication to preparedness is perhaps the best way to honor the memories of those we lost that day."